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ABSTRACT

A centralized office of student services was developed in a college of education to provide academic advice. The office aids students in adding or dropping courses, making degree plans, evaluating transfer work, applying for admission and certification, clarifying graduation and student teacher requirements, and general programmatic counseling. The office has four faculty members who serve as Director of the Office of Student Services, Director of Student Teaching, Director of Early Field Experiences, and Director of International Students. There are also advisors for degree plans and teacher certification. The positive aspects of this operation include the easy accessibility to students and faculty which results from the personnel being physically housed in one central area. Better communication among the personnel responsible for administering the services has reduced student frustration and has increased staff efficiency. (JD)

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Meeting Student's Needs: A Promising Innovation

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Meeting Student's Needs: A Promising Innovation

Most universities pride themselves on being student-oriented and placing the concerns of the students first. However, if academic advising is used as the criterion, it would appear that many universities fall far short of this "student-first" concept. In fact, many students would contend that student concerns appear to be a rather low priority item in most universities.

In the student's search for answers concerning filing a degree plan, evaluation of transfer credit, graduation requirements, student teaching requirements, and a myriad of similar concerns, s/he is often confronted with conflicting and, sometimes, incorrect advice. Frequently, s/he is shuffled from office to office across campus only to discover that his/her advisor is not available. Because there is little reward in terms of promotion and tenure for those professors responsible for advising students, some advisors are indifferent and perform their advisory functions in a perfunctory fashion. When this occurs, the student leaves the advisor's office with a feeling of bewilderment, if not anger, and the feeling that no one cares about either the individual or the problem.

In this day of declining student enrollments, universities must give serious consideration to the effectiveness of the advising function. In recognition of this important aspect of a student's university life, North Texas State University's College of Education organized an Office of Student Services designed to accommodate most student needs in one central office. Within this office students may add and drop courses, have a degree plan made, have transfer work evaluated, apply for admission to teacher education, and apply for teacher certification. They may also arrange for early field experiences and student teaching as well as receive programmatic counseling. General academic advising,

however, is provided in each division where the faculty is responsible for advising on individual programs.

The following pages describe the organization and operation of the Office of Student Services.

Office of Student Services

The office has four faculty members, with one serving as Director of the Office, one as Director of Student Teaching, one as Director of Early Field Experiences, and one as Director of International Students. Each faculty member receives one-half of his/her work load credit for the administrative responsibilities of these positions. Two professional staff serve as Degree Plan Advisor and Teacher Certification Advisor, respectively. A detailed description of each function of the Office of Student Services follows.

Director, Office of Student Services

The Director of the Office of Student Services, a faculty member, is responsible for the total operation of the office. S/he reports to the Dean of the College of Education through the Office of the Assistant Dean.

The Director has primary responsibility in several areas. First, s/he serves as Director of Admissions and as Certification Officer. In these capacities s/he coordinates and evaluates all procedures associated with admissions to the teacher education program and recommends State Certification for students who have completed approved programs. The Degree Plan Advisor, Certification Advisor, and the Graduate Assistant who coordinates admissions to teacher education procedures report to the Director.

Second, the Director is the custodian of travel funds connected with functions of the Office of Student Services. These include travel to off-campus classes and travel to supervise student teachers, interns, and other field experiences.

Third, the Director provides liaison with student organizations in Education and gives assistance to them as appropriate. S/he also advises students, readmits students on academic suspension, and issues student overload permits.

Fourth, the Director coordinates and conducts off-campus registration for the College of Education. S/he also provides an information table at on-campus registration and conducts late registration for the College of Education.

Associate Director, Office of Student Services

Director of Student Teaching

The Director of Student Teaching, a faculty member, confers with public school personnel regarding the student teaching program and the placement of the student teachers in their districts. S/he also assigns faculty who have been released part time for student teaching supervision to a particular location with a specified number of student teachers. S/he advises students regarding student teaching and updates student teaching policies in cooperation with university student teaching supervisors, public school personnel, and student teachers. In addition s/he is the university representative to various Teacher Centers in the area.

Associate Director, Office of Student Services

Director of Early Field Experiences

The Director of Early Field Experiences, a faculty member, is responsible for all aspects of field experiences except student teaching. Field experiences for all divisions of the College of Education and other university departments desiring experiences in a public school are processed by the

director. S/he also counsels and advises students, maintains close relations with area public schools, and represents the university on various Teacher Center Councils.

Associate Director, Office of Student Services

Director of International Students

We have felt the need for some time to have available a counselor/advisor for our large foreign student population. A director has been appointed Director of the Office of International Students and is located in the suite of the Office of Student Services for the College of Education. In the area of counselor/advisor, he performs the following tasks:

a. He interprets the College of Education's policies, rules, and organizations to the foreign students.

b. He counsels students regarding education programs, catalog information, and possible sources available to the foreign students in other parts of the campus.

c. He assists the international students in contacting the appropriate person for meeting his particular needs.

d. He assists the international students in adjusting to America and American education. An important objective is to inform the international student of the attitudes of Americans toward foreigners.

e. An important task of the Director is that of monitoring academic progress of the international students. Accurate cumulative records and reports are kept on each student. It is necessary to schedule conferences with each student to discuss his progress.

The addition of this service to foreign students is a sensible move and is of great value to our international students.

Degree Plan Advisor

The Degree Plan Advisor advises students concerning courses that are required for undergraduate degrees. Since few education courses may be

taken before the junior year, the Degree Plan Advisor evaluates courses already taken and determines deficiencies and prepares a degree plan for each student. S/he also evaluates transfer courese to determine if they substitute for required courses or will be given elective credit.

The Degree Plan Advisor processes all paper work for graduation. S/he also assists with late and off-campus registration and verifies course requirements for changes in the university catalog.

Teacher Certification Advisor

The Teacher Certification Advisor prepares recommendations and applications for all students requesting certification (undergraduate and graduate) and sends them to the Texas Education Agency which subsequently issues the teaching certificate. S/he prepares applications for persons who have been certified through North Texas State University and request certification in another state.

The Advisor prepares certification deficiency plans for students who have degrees from out-of-state institutions or who did not satisfy certification requirements when their degrees were completed. S/he maintains a close relationship with the Texas Education Agency concerning changes in certification requirements as well as maintaining current information from the College of Education and other colleges in the university regarding certification requirements.

Other Staff

Graduate Student Assistant (20 hours per week). Clears all students for admission to introductory courses in Elementary and Secondary Education by checking transcripts and applications to Teacher Education. The Graduate Assistant coordinates speech and hearing examinations, administers standardized

tests, and maintains admissions records.

Graduate Student Assistant (20 hours per week). Assists the Director of Student Teaching and the Director of Early Field Experiences as needed in administration and research.

Office Supervisor. Coordinates all office personnel and secretarial functions in the office. S/he maintains financial records, processes travel vouchers, coordinates late registration and off-campus registration.

Student Teaching Secretary. Provides secretarial and clerical assistance to the Director of Student Teaching and the Director of Early Field Experiences.

Receptionist. Answers telephone, responds to student needs, directs student to proper person for assistance, and assists Degree Plan Advisor and Teacher Certification Advisor as needed.

Student Secretary (20 hours per week). Assists Director of Early Field Experiences with clerical and secretarial needs in processing applications for field experiences.

The Office of Student Services has functioned as described above for five years with minor changes and adjustments. The positive aspects of this operation include the easy accessability to students and faculty which results from the personnel being physically housed in one central area. Better communication among the personnel responsible for administering the services has reduced student frustration and increased efficiency of the staff. Administrative efficiency has improved by giving the Director of the Office of Student Services authority to resolve a myriad of student related problems which previously had been delegated to various administrators. Public relations with

area schools have improved as they can deal with one office. Better coordination of all early field experiences results since one person administers the placement of all students.

Anyone considering the implementation of a similar office should be careful to communicate adequately to the general faculty the precise functions to be accomplished. A new organizational pattern requires adequate adjustment time for those providing the services as well as for those being serviced. Although faculty are assigned one-half time to the office, experience has shown that in actuality they spend much more than one-half time fulfilling job responsibilities.

The experience in the College of Education at North Texas State University with a centralized Office of Student Services has been positive. The office is designed to provide students with program related services and has been very successful in its mission.